

## ■ Historic Overview

The history of Columbia County dates back to the year 2,750 B.C. when the area's first residents settled on Stalling's Island, located in the eastern corner of the county. These early settlers were a group of shell-mound builders and the area they settled is listed on the National Register due to its archaeological significance.

The first European settlers to arrive in Columbia County during Colonial times were a small group of Quakers who came from the Carolinas. They purchased land from the Uchee Indians in 1751, but remained in the area for only a short time. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, that area of the county was within the territory known as St. Paul's Parish. In 1790, Columbia County was officially created from a part of Richmond County. It was named in honor of Christopher Columbus. Most settlers arriving in the area during the late 1700s hailed from the Virginias and Carolinas. Cotton reigned supreme as the chief crop in the area and afforded local settlers much prosperity. The Civil War significantly impacted the area and contributed to the loss of many of Columbia County's finest citizens, much of its wealth, and the majority of its national political power. In the years that followed, the County focused on expansion of the Augusta Canal and new rail lines to serve the southeast as it tried to rebuild in the aftermath of the war.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one of the most significant impacts on the county was the establishment in 1941 of the Camp Gordon military base (now Fort Gordon) in the southeastern portion of the county. As a result of the military presence in the area, no longer was farming the primary occupation in the county. Many residents retained their farms but pursued public jobs during World War II. Similarly, many of the men and boys who went off to war returned home to seek occupations other than farming. The construction of the Clark's Hill Dam in 1946, and subsequent construction of the Atomic Energy Commission's Savannah River nuclear plant in nearby Aiken County, also fueled new job growth in the area. Throughout the 1950s-1960s Columbia County became an ever-expanding bedroom community; and with the new residents came national retail chains and modern shopping centers, particularly in the Martinez area.

Today much the County's history is preserved through the ongoing efforts of the Columbia County Historical Society. Responding to current growth pressures in the area, county residents have expressed interest in an intensified approach to preservation, but current efforts remain on a case-by-case basis.

## ■ Inventory of Historic Resources

The county's rich history is made evident by the numerous historic buildings dispersed throughout the area. In 1990 the Columbia County Board of Commissioners conducted a survey of all historic resources in the County built prior to 1940. As a result of these efforts, approximately 95% of the county was surveyed, with the exception of properties that either were inaccessible to the surveyor or that the surveyor felt had lost all integrity and could not be restored to their original historic appearance. Of the 377 properties surveyed a list of 28 possible National Register Historic Sites was compiled. While these individual sites appear to be eligible

for National Register designation, there is only one district in the county that might meet National Register criteria, this district being located in the city of Harlem. In the written survey prepared by the surveyor, it was stated that numerous important historic sites were being neglected as a result of rapid development and increasing property values. In 1990, about 75% of the properties surveyed were in good condition. However, the survey emphasizes that all the historic properties in Columbia County are in serious danger of destruction.

#### **Possible National Register Sites in Columbia County**

1. "The Cedars," c. 1885
2. Macedonia Baptist Church, c. 1880
3. Evans School Dormitory, c. 1900
4. Evans School Arch and Columns, c. 1925
5. G.B. Lamkin House, c. 1925
6. "Cedar Hill," c. 1820
7. Old Washington Road
8. Damascus Baptist Church, c. 1900
9. Dunns' Chapel, c. 1890
10. Winfield Area, c. 1840
11. Sharon Church, 1869
12. William Few house site, c. 1930
13. Shiloh Church, c. 1857
14. Cedar Dale, c. 1858
15. Woodville, c. 1814
16. Old Kiokee Church, c. 1804
17. Appling Community (multiple sites, c. 1850-1925)
18. Shucraft Road House, c. 1890
19. Columbia Road at Hereford Farm Road, c. 1870
20. Plantation House on Columbia Road, c. 1830
21. Columbia Road, c. 1790
22. Otts House, c. 1865
23. Wrightsboro Road, c. 1815
24. Magruder Home, c. 1810
25. Grovetown (multiple sites along Robinson Avenue)
26. The Dodge House, c. 1910
27. Campania
28. Harlem (multiple sites, c. 1850)

[Source: *Columbia County Historic Resource Survey Report*, Griffith Lamkin Polatty, December 5, 1990; Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division]

#### **Assessment of Historic Preservation Needs**

The rapid growth and urbanization occurring in Columbia County necessitates a more rigorous approach to preservation in order to save remaining resources. In the past, the Columbia County Historical Society has worked with historic preservation planners from the CSRA Regional Development Center to discuss preservation issues. This relationship needs to become more formalized and proactive to move towards designating existing sites before they are demolished. In particular, there are numerous sites in Harlem and Appling that could qualify for National Register status and there is widespread interest in designating Appling as a Historical Township. This designation would enhance Appling's status as the symbolic county seat, promote its distinct community identity, and preserve its traditional character.



**Columbia County**  
**Historic Sites**

**LEGEND**

- County Boundaries
- City Boundaries
- Streets
- Historic Sites

